

Characterisation		Shakespeare's themes and conflicts	
Macbeth (tragic hero)	initially brave and courageous; plagued by self-doubt and indecision; becomes a ruthless, calculating killer. Obsession with ambition destroys his noble characteristics. Cynical and world-weary at the end of the play.	Ambition	Ambition motivates M to commit terrible deeds; ambition is the tragic hero's hamartia - his 'fatal flaw'; Lady Macbeth persuades M by appealing to his ambition; Banquo shows ambition can be balanced by morals and reason. Shakespeare warns against the corrosive power of unchecked ambition.
Lady Macbeth	Macbeth's wife; drives his ambition in the beginning, but loses her control by the end. Devious, cunning and morally ambiguous. Unconventional and rebellious. Ruthlessly ambitious. Rejects conventional femininity and maternal instincts.	Fate vs free will	M first line 'so foul and fair a day' hints that Witches already in control; Witches use prophecies to determine Macbeth's future and eventual downfall; Macbeth fails to 'cheat' fate by having B killed. Ambition and LM also affect Macbeth's free will. M is controlled by prophecies - Banquo is not.
Banquo	Macbeth's close friend and ally who also receives prophecies. Perceptive and cautious – does not immediately believe prophecies. Brave, noble and wise. Initially a moral contrast/counterpoint but corruptible?	Power & corruption	From 'valiant' & 'brave warrior' to 'tyrant' & 'butcher.' When the crown is taken wrongfully, the country suffers. M and LM's journey
Duncan	King of Scotland at the beginning of the play; strong and respected leader. Trusting and nurturing towards his nobles.	Appearance & reality	The deception and beguiling shown by the Macbeths in A1; dissembling behaviour; the 'movement' of Birnam Wood; M and LM hide true intentions from Duncan in A1; Witches' riddles/language: 'Fair is foul' to deceive and confuse.
Malcolm	Duncan's oldest son and next in line to the throne. Joins the English army to defeat Macbeth at the end of the play. Honest and wise. Becomes a strong leader.	The supernatural vs the natural order	Appear at the start to set the tone/to suggest their influence over events; shown to have evil intent and evil ways; the Witches' prophecies drive the action of the play; hallucinations (dagger, ghost, blood).
The Three Witches	Supernatural beings who predict events in the play; mysterious and ambiguous; gruesome and evil; disturbing and unsettling presence on stage; unnatural; symbolic of disruption of the natural order.	Good vs evil	Duncan acknowledged as a 'good' King.; Malcolm is a fair and good leader (the rightful one); M and LM – imagery associated with evil; M transforms from 'noble' and respected in A1 to a 'dead butcher' in A5; evil represented by Witches; LM loses her femininity to be more cruel /ruthless.
Macduff (Macbeth's foil)	Thane of Fife; honest, sincere and loyal; determined to avenge his family's slaughter; represents goodness and hope; ends Macbeth's tyranny and restores natural order at end.	Loyalty vs betrayal	Macduff and Banquo's words and actions. Thane of Cawdor executed for betrayal, and M rewarded for loyalty. M and LM's betrayal leads to their demise; loyalty shown to different things.
Literary techniques and methods		Peace vs violence	Battle, at start; contains murders of men, women, and children, ends with suicide of LM, a climactic siege & the beheading of Macbeth. An important lesson about violence: every violent act, even those done for selfless reasons, seems to lead inevitably to the next – "blood will have blood"
Tragedy	Macbeth is a tragedy and the character of Macbeth is a tragic hero, a man who began nobly but is driven to his downfall by a fatal flaw (hamartia - ambition) and is defeated at the hands of his nemesis (Macduff).	Jacobean Context	
Symbolism	blood/bloody hands = guilt ; light and dark (e.g. murder committed at night) = good and evil; sleep = innocence, purity and peace of mind; the natural world = correct order of things - animals rebel when things are not right, milk	Divine Right and regicide	Jacobean believed that God had chosen the King and was His representative on earth. To kill a king was considered a terrible crime against the natural order. If the Great Chain of Being was disrupted – a hierarchy of all living things from God then the King then Lords and Thanes down to animals and rocks - there would be devastating effects for all - physical and emotional.
Dramatic irony	When the audience knows information the characters do not. E.g. Macbeth orders Banquo murdered and then sees his ghost at the banquet.	Gender	Narrow expectations of women: belonged to their fathers and then to their husbands. Women could not own property of their own. Conventions dictated submissive, quiet, domesticated behaviour. LM subverts these. Men were seen as ambitious, dominant, ruthless, violent.
Pathetic fallacy	Unnatural events are usually echoed by unnatural weather. E.g. thunder and lightning at the start of the play creates an ominous and violent mood.	Super natural	Jacobean widely believed and feared witchcraft and supernatural powers. James 1 had an obsessive fear of witches writing "Daemonologie" in 1597. His fear stirred up national panic, resulting in the torture and death of 1000s. Unconventional women were suspected and persecuted.
Hamartia	a fatal flaw leading to the downfall of a tragic hero.		
Soliloquy	a character speaks thoughts and feelings out loud, sharing them with the audience – gives illusion of being unspoken reflections. E.g. 'Glamis thou art, and Cawdor'		
Aside (stage direction)	a character speaks thoughts aloud to the audience, but other characters on stage cannot hear them; usually short speeches.		
Dramatic moments/ Tension	A1, S1 –Witches. A1, S5 – Lady Mac reads letter - wishes to become ruthless. A2, S2 – M brings bloody daggers from Duncan's room - LM takes charge. A3, S4 – Feast - Macbeth sees ghost of Banquo. A5, S1 – Lady Macbeth sleep walking. A5 Macduff's revelation 'untimely ripp'd'		

Macbeth essential vocab KO

Supernatural – forces people believe exist although they are impossible according to scientific laws

Ambiguous- unclear or confusing because it can be understood in more than one way

Prophecy- prediction, forecast

Patriarchal- a society in which men have most or all of the power or importance

Contemporary – modern, relates to the present time

Conventional – behaviour or opinions that are ordinary and normal, relating to a present time

Courageous/ noble/ honourable – brave / admirable and good/ respected

Indecisive – finding it difficult to make a decision

Ambition – to want to achieve something very much

Tragedy – a story which ends in a sad event, often the death of the main character

Regicide – the act of killing a king

Legitimate – acceptable according to the law, lawful, real, true

Manipulate/coerce – skilfully force or persuade people to do something they aren't sure about

Cunning – to achieve things in a clever way, often deceiving others

Emasculate – to weaken someone, making them ineffective

Exploit – to use a situation to gain advantage of someone, misuse, abuse

Hubristic – arrogant, extremely proud, vain (Lady Macbeth exploited Macbeth's hubris)

Usurper – someone who takes another person's title or position when they have no right to

to dissemble (dissemblance) – when people dissemble they hide their true emotions or feelings – act, pretend

Tyrant – someone who treats people they have authority over in a cruel way – tyrannical - bully

Ruthless – someone who will do anything harsh and cruel to achieve what they want

Futile – if something is futile, there's no point in doing it because there's no chance of success, pointless

Corruption – to be dishonest or do illegal things in exchange for power or money

World-weary – a person who no longer feels excited about anything